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SUBJECT: NDC HOPES TO BRING MINOR PARTIES INTO THE TENT

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Classified By: POLCHIEF GPERGL FOR REASONS 1.4 b&d

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. Poloff met on January 13 with Hannah Tetteh, the new ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) party's head of communications for the transition. She discussed the state of the handover, parliamentary issues, party appointments and changes, Kufuor's final actions as President, NDC's quest for better gender equality in government, and the likely role of former president Jerry Rawlings. Most significantly, Tetteh described how the NDC plans to merge the two most important minor parties--the Convention People's Party (CPP) and the People's National Convention (PNC) into the NDC fold, basically turning Ghanaian politics into a two-party system. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Hannah Tetteh, one of the most moderate and influential voices in the NDC, began the conversation by lamenting the poor quality of the information and material the transition team has been receiving from the outgoing New Patriotic Party (NPP) administration. From the president's office down through most of the ministries, she said, the turnover papers have been minimal, in some cases, just a few bulleted items to sum up a ministry's entire portfolio. Whether caused by laziness, indiscipline, or a purposeful attempt to cover up transgressions, she said, it is slowing down the transition process and forcing the new government to dig deeper into records to determine the status of affairs in most government agencies. As examples, she pointed to government vehicles and residences that had not been accounted for, as well as a last-minute wave of military promotions and foreign service inductions that had raised eyebrows even among NPP supporters. Although President Mills had promised that the party would not pursue partisan retribution, Tetteh made it clear that obvious episodes of malfeasance would have to be referred to the courts.

¶3. (C) Tetteh confirmed that the NDC had paid dearly to obtain the votes of the two PNC members in Parliament (reftel), saying that in addition to accommodating the party with district, commission, and ambassadorial positions, both MPs would be receiving Deputy Minister jobs in return for their agreement to sit with the NDC to constitute a legislative majority. Enforcing party discipline on critical votes would still be a key objective, since the margin was so thin. She also noted that the party was courting Alhaji Saani Iddi, the independent MP from Wulensi in the Northern Region, but that so far his demands (for both position and money) were unreasonable, and he would "have to come back down to earth." On the subject of neophyte CPP politician Samia Nkrumah (Kwame Nkrumah's daughter, who has joined neither majority or minority in Parliament, and has pledged to vote on issues based on their merit), Tetteh simply shook her head and said "that girl is going to have a lot to learn."

¶4. (C) The choice of Joyce Bamford Addo as speaker of Parliament was pure genius on many levels, Tetteh said.

First of all, she is a woman, and the NDC has a long way to go on gender balance in high office. Secondly, and most importantly, it was clear that the NPP could find no grounds to object to her. Lastly, she was seen as someone who would take orders and be malleable to party discipline. She said that for important votes, the party would remove Addo and put the First Deputy Speaker Edward Adjaho into her place as a stronger enforcer. She also confirmed that Majority Leader Alban Bagbin would not be in that position for long because he wanted to become part of the executive branch and run a ministry. Tetteh further stated that at the next party congress, Kwabena Adjei, NDC's national chairman, would likely be replaced, because "he lacks maturity -- and I don't mean because of his age."

15. (C) On the subject of Jerry Rawlings, Tetteh said that the party had arrived at a working compromise that she was certain would be satisfactory. Betty Mould Idrissu, wife of the party's campaign chairman and a protege of both Rawlings and his wife Nana Konadu, would be getting a ministerial position, and so would at least one other of Rawlings' closest associates. Others close to the former president would also be given positions of some importance, as yet undetermined. As for Rawlings himself, said Tetteh, the most important thing for him is that the party pay him the respect he feels he is due. She once again verified that Mills would seek his counsel where appropriate, but Rawlings would not be an "eminence grise" pulling any strings in the new administration.

16. (C) Finally, Tetteh said that the NDC is very keen to consolidate its power by incorporating both the CPP and PNC

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parties into the NDC, and convincing both their executive councils and their followers that they have no future as minor parties (a supposition that could be reasonably deduced by their steady decline in support in recent elections). The plan is to assert that the NDC is the rightful inheritor of the principles of both parties, and that its manifesto more closely mirrors the aspirations of each party and the tenets of Nkrumahism. The party also plans to play on the CPP origins of both Mills and Vice President John Mahama. While he was still in secondary school, Mills was selected to study at the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute, and became a CPP member. Mahama's father was a minister under Nkrumah, and the family has long-standing CPP ties.

17. (C) Another gambit to move the CPP closer to the NDC will be to appoint several female CPP members throughout the country as District Chief Executives. (NOTE: The president appoints all 138 DCEs, as well as all 10 Regional Ministers. END NOTE) While the party may not reach its goal of 40 per cent females in government-appointed positions, Tetteh was hopeful that they would manage at least 35 per cent. A large number of women serve in district assemblies, and many of them are CPP members. The NDC plans to target them, both to win them over to the NDC, and because the party perceives that women DCEs display a greater sense of loyalty to the central government than do their male counterparts.

18. (C) COMMENT. Managing to co-opt the two significant minor parties with any real following would be a huge coup for the NDC, but it is unlikely to be a ploy they can carry out anytime soon. Party allegiances still run deep, especially for the PNC in the northern regions of Ghana, and for the CPP in the Western Region where Nkrumah was born. Constitutionally, any formal party change for MPs would require them to sit for a by-election. Tetteh also acknowledged that a major obstacle to winning over those party loyalists is named Jerry Rawlings. She said that the party would have to prove that Rawlings was truly out of power, something she was sure they could manage. There is no denying, however, that given the waning fortunes of the CPP and PNC and the soul-searching that has resulted from their abysmal showing in the 2008 elections, the ruling NDC party

is making its move at the right time. With patience and the prudent distribution of largesse, courting these blocs could deliver a significant long-term dividend.

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